THE

Impartial Critick:

OR, SOME

OBSERVATIONS

Upon a Late BOOK, Entituled,

A Short View of TRAGEDY,

Written by Mr. *RYMER*,

AND

Dedicated to the Right Honourable

CHARLES Earl of DORSET, *&c.*

By Mr. *DENNIS.*

Hanc etiam Mecœnas *aſpice partem.*

Virgil.

LONDON:

Printed for *R. Taylor*, near *Stationers-Hall.* 1693.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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A

Letter to a Friend:

Sent with the Following

DIALOGUES.

SIR,

UPon reading Mr. *Rymer*'s late Book, I soon found that its Design was to make several Alterations in the Art of the Stage, which instead of reforming, would ruine the *English Drama*. For to set up the *Grecian* Method amongst us with success, it is absolutely necessary to restore not only their Religion and their Policy, but to transport us to the same Climate in which *Sophocles* and *Euripides* writ; or else by reason of those different Circum-

ſtances, ſeveral things which were graceful and decent with them, muſt ſeem ridiculous and abſurd to us, as ſeveral things which would have appear'd highly extravagant to them, muſt look proper and becoming with us.

For an Example of the firſt: The Chorus had a good effect with the *Athenians*, becauſe it was adapted to the Religion and Temper of that People, as I have obſerv'd more at large in the Fourth Dialogue. But we having nothing in our Religion or Manners, by which we may be able to defend it, it ought certainly to be baniſhed from our Stage. For Poetry in general, being an imitation of Nature, Tragedy muſt be ſo too. Now it is neither probable, nor natural, that the Chorus, who repreſent the Intereſted Spectators of a Tragical Action, ſhould Sing and Dance upon ſuch terrible or moving Events, as neceſſarily arrive in every Tragedy. And I wonder that Mr. *Rymer* ſhould cry up a Chorus, in the very ſame Book in which he cries down the Opera: for no Man can give any Reaſon, why an Opera is an extravagant thing; but I will, by retorting the ſame Reaſon, prove a Chorus extravagant too. But

to make the abſurdity of it the more apparent, let me deſire you, *Sir*, a little to look back to the *Spaniſh Invaſion*, which Mr. *R*--- fancies a proper Subject for a Tragedy: Suppoſe then, that an Expreſs gives Notice to Queen *Elizabeth*, of the Landing of the *Spaniards* upon our Coaſt, and of great Number of Subjects revolting and running in to them. The Queen upon the reception of this News, falls a lamenting her Condition, with an Air becoming of a Sovereign Princeſs, in whom Sorrow and Majeſty muſt be united: ſo far there is no offence to Nature or Decency; for this may be call'd Tragedy upon the Stage of the World. But then, *Sir*, ſuppoſe that as ſoon as the Queen has left off lamenting, the Ladies about her, in their Ruffs and Farthingals, fell a dancing a *Saraband* to a doleful Ditty: Do you think, *Sir*, that if this had really happened at *White-Hall*, it would have been poſſible to have beheld it without laughing, tho' one had been never ſo much concerned for his Country? Now can any thing that is incongruous and abſurd in the World, be proper and decent on the Tragick Stage.

I now beg leave, *Sir*, to give a particular inſtance of ſomething that muſt needs have been very moving with the *Athenians*, which yet would have been but ill receiv'd amongſt us: And that is a paſſage in the *Antigone* of *Sophocles*. That Story, as it is manag'd by that admirable Poet is one of the moſt moving that ever was: And there is no part of it that touches me more, than the Complaints of *Antigone*, upon her Condemnation by *Creon*. But there is one thing peculiar in it, which muſt needs have exerted Compaſſion in the *Athenians* in an extraordinary manner; for otherwiſe *Sophocles*, who perfectly underſtood his Audience, would never have made her repeat it, at leaſt, four times in the ſame Act: For when ſhe was condemn'd to the ſevereſt Puniſhment, which was to be buried alive, the thing that lay moſt heavy upon her Heart was, that ſhe was to go to Hell with her Maiden-head. I think, *Sir*, I need not take pains to demonſtrate, that this paſſage would have been laugh'd at with us. Now what reaſon can be given, why that ſhould appear ſo contempti-

ble

ble to us, which mov'd the *Athenians* ſo much? The only Reaſon that can be aſſign'd, is the difference of Climate and Cuſtoms. The *Athenians* by uſing their Women, as the Modern *Italians* do theirs, plainly declared their Opinion of them; which was, that Paſſion was predominant over Reaſon in them; and that they were perpetually thinking, how they might make ſome Improvement of the Talent which NATURE had given their Sex. The *Athenians* therefore having theſe thoughts of their Women, the Complaint that *Antigone* made, could not appear peculiar and ſurprizing to them. Now it is evident, that every thing which is ridiculous muſt be both particular and ſurprizing; for nothing which is general and expected can excite a ſenſible Man to Laughter. But we having quite contrary thoughts of our Women; which is plain, by the Confidence which we ſo generouſly repoſe in them, a Maid who had ſaid, what *Antigone* did, upon our Stage, would have ſaid ſomething that would have appear'd a frailty par-

particular and ſurprizing, and would have been ridiculous.

Thus, *Sir*, have I given you two inſtances of things which ſucceeded very well with the Ancients, and would yet be very ill receiv'd amongſt us, upon the account of the difference of our Religion, Climate, and Cuſtoms. I ſhall now give you ſome account of a thing, which is very well receiv'd upon our Stage, but would have ſucceeded but ill with the Ancient *Grecians*, by reaſon of the ſame difference of Climate and Cuſtoms.

The thing that I mean, is Love; which could but rarely be brought upon the *Grecian* Stage, without the violation of probability, conſidering that their Scene lay generally in their own, or a warmer Country: For two People in a Tragedy cannot make Love without being together, and being alone. Now when Lovers came together in *Greece*, they found ſomething elſe to do, than to talk. Their Women under ſo

warm

warmer Sun, melted much ſooner than ours. Nor were they ſo fantaſtick as long to refuſe what they eternally deſire; or to pretend a mortal diſpleaſure, for being offer'd to be oblig'd in the moſt ſenſible part of them. Therefore moſt of the Love that appear'd upon the *Athenian* Stage, was between ſuch People as their own Cuſtoms oblig'd to cohabit, as *Admetus* and *Alceſtis*, who were Man and Wife; *Hippolitus* and *Phedra*, who were Son and Mother-in-Law, and with which laſt, the only Obſtacle to Enjoyment, was the Horrour which ſo Criminal a Paſſion inſpir'd. Had the *Athenian* Poets introduc'd upon their Stage two paſſionate Lovers, who had not been related, and engag'd them in a Converſation both tender and delicate, an Audience would have been apt to ask, with the *Spaniſh Lady*, mentioned by Monſieur St. *Euremont*: *Que d' eſprit mal employé! A quoy bon tous ces beaux diſcours quand ils ſont enſemble?* You know, *Sir*, that this Lady made this Reflection, which St. *Euremont* commends ſo much, upon the Read-

ing a Converſation in *Cleopatra*, between two paſſionate Lovers. Upon which that ingenious Gentleman, with his uſual good Sence, takes occaſion to condemn *Calprenede*, for making no diſtinction betwixt the *Love* of a *Southern* Climate, and that of *England* or *France*.

By what I have ſaid, *Sir*, it may be eaſily gueſs'd, that it is in vain to think of ſetting up a Chorus upon the *Engliſh* Stage, becauſe it ſucceeded at *Athens*; or to think of expelling *Love* from our Theatres, becauſe it was rarely in *Grecian Tragedies*.

But ſince I ſhall treat of this laſt hereafter, and I have already treſpaſſed upon your Patience, I ſhall only beg leave of you to make one Apology for my ſelf, and ſo for the preſent take leave of you.

Let

Let then the Admirers of Mr. *Waller* know, (that is, all the ingenious Men in the Kingdom) that if I have in the following Dialogue rigorously examin'd some Verses which were writ by that Great Man, I have been far from doing it out of a motive of Malice or Vanity, or so much with a design to attack Mr. *Waller*, as to vindicate *Shakespear*.

For Mr. *Rymer*, who pretends that this last is without Excellency, affirming, that the fore-mention'd Verses of the first are without Fault, it appears to me to be very plain, that the Man who overlookt Mr. *Waller*'s Faults, might overlook *Shakespear*'s Excellencies. For it is much more easie to find Faults, than it is to discern Beauties. To do the first requires but common Sense, but to do the last a Man must have Genius.

There is no Man who has a greater Veneration for Mr. *Waller* than I have: We

 have

have all of us reaſon to Honour the Man, who has been an Honour to *England:* And it is with an inexpreſſible pleaſure, that I find his Death lamented by two great *French* Wits, *viz. La Fontaine*, and Monſieur St. *Euremont*. A Man may in many places of Mr. *Waller*'s Works, ſee not only Wit, Spirit, good Sence, but a happy and delicate turn of Thought, with clearneſs, boldneſs, juſtneſs, ſublimeneſs, and gallantry. For the laſt of theſe Qualities, I know not whither he has been ſurpaſs'd by any Writer in any Language.

Voiture, indeed, is a very gallant Writer too; but his Gallantry is of ſuch a different Character from our *Engliſh* Poets, that they will not admit of Compariſon. Mr. *Waller*'s is more ſprightly, more ſhining, more bold, and more admirable. The *French*-man's, by the Character of his Country, more ſupple, more ſoft, more inſinuating, and more bewitching: But beſides thoſe rare Qualities which are to be found in that Admirable Man, there are Two for

for which we were in a peculiar manner oblig'd to him. For he not only improv'd the Language of our Verſe conſiderably, but was the firſt who us'd our Ears to the Muſick of a juſt Cadence. Yet if any one is of Opinion, that either his Language or Numbers are always perfect, he errs: For as there are ſometimes Improprieties in his Expreſſions, ſo there is a great deal of Proſe in his Verſe. Mr. *Dryden*, who had the good luck to come after him, has the Honour to have finiſh'd what the other ſo happily begun. For as we have nothing to ſhew, ev'n in Proſe, which has a greater purity than ſome of his blank Verſe, and particularly that of the *Spaniſh Fryar*, (thô at the ſame time that it has the purity and eaſineſs of Proſe, it has the dignity and ſtrength of Poetry) ſo I cannot imagine any thing more perfect than his Equal Numbers in Heroick Verſe, where-ever he deſign'd them perfect; and in this he will never be exceeded by any Man, unleſs length of Time makes ſome ſtrange Alteration in the Tongue. I do not believe that any ſenſible Man can be-

believe I ſay this to flatter him: For what can be got by flattering a Poet; eſpecially a Poet in Mr. *Dryden's* Circumſtances? But this we may be aſſur'd of, that as long as we are fooliſhly partial to the Dead, and unreaſonably unjuſt to the Living, we muſt reſolve to continue at a ſtand in Politer Learning, and muſt not think of making that Progreſs which the *French* have made. I know very well, that we have greater Geniuſes than they, and that we can ſhew better Writers; but that they can ſhew more good Writers than we, no Man who knows them can doubt. Since our Poets want the ſolid Encouragement that theirs have; that is, the plentiful Penſions: It would be folly to deny them that fantaſtick Poſſeſſion which they are contented and pleas'd with; ſince Fame is a ſort of an Airy Revenue, which they who unjuſtly detain from the Owners, cannot themſelves enjoy; it is a baſe Envy to put the Legal Owners off to a vain Reverſion.

Thus

Thus, *Sir*, have I ſent you my Thoughts, with a great deal more haſt than ever I thought to have writ any thing which was deſign'd to be publiſhed. I deſire you therefore to pardon the negligence of the expreſſion, if you find never ſo little good Sence to make ſome amends for it. I am,

SIR,

Yours, &c.

A Letter to a Friend, &c.

The First DIALOGUE.

BEAUMONT, FREEMAN.

Beaum. *JACK Freeman!* This is an unexpected, and a ſurprizing Viſit: with what Impatience have I long'd for this happy Hour, and how have I regretted this tedious Abſence! Prithee, how long haſt thou been in Town?

Freem. But juſt time enough to ſhift me; yet time enough to receive two Aſſignations, the one from a Lawyer, and the other from a Wench, who, as the Devil would have it, ſaw me as I paſſed in the Stage-Coach thro' the *Hay Market*. But I reſolv'd to viſit neither, till I had ſeen thee.

Beaum. Surprizingly kind! eſpecially in this infamous Town, where 'tis almoſt ſcandalous to be ſo much a Friend; where Friendſhip is ſeen to give place, not only to Buſineſs and Pleaſure, but ſometimes too even to Vanity; where I have known an old grave Rogue, who has had nothing to do, diſappoint three or four honeſt Fellows, purely that he might be thought a Raskal of Buſineſs: and where I have known a young Fop baulk a Drinking Appointment, out of a longing deſire to be thought more leud, and diverted by ſome wicked Adventure. But, prithee, how do all our Friends in *Hamp-ſhire*?

Freem. Why, Faith, here of late, they have done ſomething odly; but by the help of the Bottle, they have ſtill made a hard ſhift: they have been as conſtantly wet, as the Weather in this obſtinate Seaſon, and being forbid by the perpetual Rains to follow the daily Labour of their Country Sports, they have handed about their Brimmers within doors, as faſt as if they had done it for Exerciſe. But I long to hear ſome News from thee. What ſay our Politick Grumblers now?

Beaum. Doſt not thou know, *Jack*, that I hate both Politicks and Politicians; every Politician who is not in a Publick Station is an Aſs, and the ſevereſt Satyr on ſo fantaſtick an Animal as Man; s'death! that a Creature ſo very impotent, ſhould yet be ſo very buſie; he has ſeldom either Wiſdom to fore-ſee, or Power to prevent the leaſt Accidents that befal him, in his own little private Capacity, yet muſt be inſolently enquiring into Secrets of State, and medling with mighty Kingdoms. For my part, I very often ſeek leud Company a Nights, tho' I hate it, on purpoſe to eſcape the News-mongers, and *Dyer* is not at more expence and trouble to obtain his Intelligence, than I am to avoid the Clamour of it.

Freem. Well! ſaid moral *Ned Beaumont*, Philoſophy and Whimſie, I ſee, are not inconſiſtent, however the Schools would impoſe upon us. This puts me in mind of a very odd Anſwer, from one whom I ask'd once, What a Clock it was by his Watch? he reply'd, That he had never been ſuch a Sott, as to throw away his Money on Watches; that he, indeed, was as profuſe as another; but that the very deſign of his Profuſion, was to be ignorant how the time paſt away; that the very Sound of a Clock, or an Alarum, occaſioned melancholy Reflections in him, and diſturbed the

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Tranquility of his Mind. So that this Fellow had as firmly reſolved not to perplex his Noddle with the Apprehenſions of Hell and Futurity, as thou haſt determin'd not to trouble thy Head with the Fear of a *French* Invaſion. But, prithee, what News from the Commonwealth of Learning? You uſe to be more inquiſitive after what paſſes there, and able to inform a Friend of it: What New Books have you now abroad.

Beaum. I ſent you down Two by the Carrier, the *Juvenal*, and the *Account of Tragedy*; and we have had none ſince in the Politer Studies, that deſerve any conſideration.

Freem. I read them over with a great deal of pleaſure, and ſome application; Dear *Ned!* How have I long'd to talk with thee of the latter.

Beaum. Aye, *Jack*, the latter: tell me truly, Hadſt not thou diſcovered, tho' there had been no Name to it, that it was written by the ſame Gentleman, the ſame Judicious and Learned Gentleman, who writ the Obſervations upon the Tragedie of the Laſt Age? Does not the ſame Spirit of Learning, and exquiſite Sence, ſeem to be diffus'd throughout it?

Freem. There is good Sence and Learning in both thoſe Books; but if I may have liberty to ſpeak my Mind, *Ned*, before you, who are the Author's Friend, there ſeems to be more Learning in the latter Book, and more good Sence in the former.

Beaum. Pray, Sir, what Exceptions have you to the Sence of the latter?

Freem. Why, to uſe plain dealing with one who is ſo much my Friend, I am neither ſatisfied with the Deſign of that Book, nor with the Method of carrying on that Deſign, nor with the Stile in which it was written.

Beaum. But ſure you cannot find fault with the Stile, *Jack*; Canſt thou have a Quarrel to Pleaſantry?

Freem. Pleaſantry! you may call it what you pleaſe, *Sir*; but that pleaſant way, is by no means fit for a Critick: a Critick, whoſe buſineſs it is to inſtruct, ſhould keep to the Didactick Stile, as *Ariſtotle*, *Longinus*, and the *French* Criticks have done: for if a Man is eternally Laughing, how can I poſſibly fall into his Opinion, who know not if he ſpeaks in good earneſt?

Beaum. Why ſurely, *Jack*, one of your Apprehenſion may eaſily diſcern when another rallies, and when he ſpeaks what he means.

Freem. Your Servant, good Mr. *Beaumont*: But ſuppoſing that may be done, when a laughing Critick condemns an Author, how can I know whether he has convicted him by the advantage of his Wit, or the force of his Argumentation? The beſt thing in the World is as liable to be ridicul'd as the ſillieſt. Has not *Scarron* impudently diverted all *Europe* at the Expence of *Virgil*, the beſt of Poets, and the juſteſt of Writers? upon which an ingenious *French*-man has made this Obſervation, That as all Human Grandeur is but Folly, ſo Sublimeneſs and the Ridiculum are very nearly related.

Beaum. But what is it that you call the Didactick Stile, *Jack*? for I have read ſo little of Criticiſm, or of Rhetorick, ſince I have enjoy'd the leiſure of a Country Life, that I have great need to be inform'd.

Freem. The Didactick Stile, is a Stile that is fit for Inſtruction, and muſt be neceſſarily upon that account, pure, perſpicuous, ſuccinct, unaffected and grave.

Beaum. Every Stile ought to have three of theſe qualities; for barbarity, obſcurity, and affectation, muſt certainly be faults in all: But why, particularly, does the Didactick Stile demand ſuccinctneſs and gravity.

Freem.

Freem. It requires Succinctneſs, that its Precepts may be more readily comprehended, and more eaſily retain'd; and it requires Gravity to give it an Air of Authority, and cauſe it to make the deeper impreſſion.

Beaum. For my part, I thought Gravity had been long ſince laught out of the World.

Freem. The falſe and affected Gravity has been juſtly and deſervedly laught at, but the true both is, and will always be venerable, being the genuine reſult of Wiſdom and Vertue; that Gravity will be always laught at, that ſtrives to impoſe a Fool upon the World for a Man of Sence, or a Raskal for a Man of Honour; for all Cheats, when they are found out, are deſpicable.

Beaum. But have not I ſeen thee laughing at a Fellow, only for looking gravely, tho' you never had heard him ſpeak?

Freem. Yes; but by that very Gravity I ſoon diſcover'd the Blockhead in him; for to a Man who underſtands the World never ſo little, a Fool never looks ſo ſillily, as when he attempts to look wiſely; which *Butler* had certainly in his Head, when he writ the following Couplet.

For Fools are known by looking wiſe,
As Men find Woodcocks by their Eyes.

'Tis, as it were, a Revenge which Nature takes of them, for forcing her by Affectation: for Gravity muſt be always affected, when it accompanies Vice or Folly; but it is natural to Wiſdom and Vertue. Now Nature will always be held reverend, and Affectation contemptible.

Beaum. Pray, what do you take Gravity to be? for I have never conſider'd it yet with attention.

Freem.

Freem. I think I may venture to deſcribe it thus: Gravity is a compos'd and majeſtick aſſurance, which appears in a Man's looks, or his air or manner of expreſſion, and proceeds from the tranquility and greatneſs of a Mind, that is guided by the Dictates of right Reaſon.

Beaum. Very well: But are not we then as obnoxious to be impos'd on by that Aſſurance, and that Air of Authority, which always go along with Gravity, as much as we are on the other ſide, by the Sophiſtication of Pleaſantry, which ſtums, as it were, an Argument, if I may uſe that expreſſion, to render it agreeable to the taſte of thoſe who are ignorant.

Freem. Not one jot obnoxious on that ſcore: for Gravity can no more make a ſilly Notion paſs upon a Man of Sence, than it can ſet off a Blockhead. Pleaſantry, indeed, may make Sophiſtry paſs upon us, becauſe it puts the Mind into agitation, and makes it unfit for enquiry; but Gravity never fails to make it ſerene, and diſpoſe it for the ſtricteſt Scrutiny.

Beaum. Well, you have here ſaid enough to make me wiſh, that Mr. *R.*— had made choice of another Stile. But you told me, that you diſlik'd the Deſign of his Book.

Freem. Yes; but I have neither eat nor drunk ſince I came to Town, and——

Beaum. I have Wine in my Chamber.

Freem. But I have not been in a Tavern this Month: Therefore prithee let's to the *Old Devil*, and talk the reſt o're a Bottle.

Beaum. Since it is your inclination, it ſhall be ſo.

The End of the Firſt Dialogue.

The

DIALOGUE II.

Beaumont, Freeman, Drawer.

Beaum. SO Sirrah! What need we have come ſo near Heaven to be wicked?

Draw. I'll make you amends in your Wine, Maſter.

Beaum. Look you do, Sir. Let me ſee, it muſt be your beſt *Red*, I think. Well, we have at leaſt got this advantage by mounting, that we are not like to be interrupted; which is as great a Plague to Criticks, as it is to Poets; not ſo much as a Drawer will come near us, without half an hour's ringing for him: ſo that I am in no danger of getting drunk to Night, tho' I am in wicked *Jack Freeman*'s Company.

Freem. Sir, you do me too much Honour, tho' I dare ſwear, no body will take me for a Saint, who knows I have been thy Friend theſe ten Years. But prithee, what ſort of Men were thoſe two, whom you ſpoke to in coming up Stairs?

Beaum. Why one of them was a Bookſeller: Now pray gueſs what the other was.

Freem. Why, Faith, an Author.

Beaum. If ever thou art indicted for a Magician, I'll turn Evidence 'egad, it was an Author, Sir.

Freem. I have been often in terrible apprehenſion of Authors, but I never was afraid of my Carcaſe before, from one of them; but this indeed had like to have

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ſaln foul upon me; they were both in a ſweet pickle.

Beaum. I ſuppoſe that *Morecraft* has been treating his Author with the Generoſity of a true Bookſeller; that is, with intention to make him drunk, and ſo to cheat him of his Copy.

Freem. If that was his deſign, the Author has turn'd the Dice upon him, I gad; for *Morecraft* is by much in the worſe Condition of the two; and perhaps the Dog drank till he grew generous in earneſt.

Beaum. If it ſhould prove ſo, to morrow he'll hang for his Vertue; for ſuch a true bred Raskal can never forgive himſelf a good Action, eſpecially if it has been coſtly to him.

Freem. You ſeem to know him well, Sir: But ſee, here comes the Wine: Sirrah, fill to this Gentleman.

Beaum. Come, *Jack*, remembring our *Hamp ſhire* Friends: Faith, 'tis good Wine; but a Pox of this *Port*, it is not ſo well taſted as *Claret*, and it intoxicates ſooner.

Freem. Why Faith, the intention was good; but I think in my Conſcience, the Prohibition of *Claret* has mainly promoted Drunkenneſs. Come, here's the foreſaid Health to you.

Beaum. I thank you; and now to our buſineſs: but before we proceed to this Book again, I deſire you to give me ſome ſatisfaction, in relation to a paſſage in the Dedication. For Mr. *Rymer* mentioning the *Greek Oedipus*, ſays afterwards of the *French*, and the *Engliſh*, *Quantum mutatus*. Now I have always taken our *Engliſh Oedipus* to be an admirable Play.

Freem. You have had a great deal of reaſon to do ſo; and it would certainly have been much better, if Mr. *Dryden* had had the ſole management of it. If

Mr.

Mr. *Rymer*, by his *Quantum mutatus*, deſigns to fix any mark of diſeſteem upon Mr. *Dryden*'s Tragedy, he is doubtleſs to blame; but if he only means, that Mr. *Dryden* has alter'd the Character of *Oedipus*, and made it leſs ſuitable to the deſign of Tragedy, according to *Ariſtotle*'s Rules, then Mr. *Rymer* is in the right of it.

Beaum. Pray ſhew me that.

Freem. I ſhall do it as ſuccinctly as I can: The Deſign of Tragedy, according to *Ariſtotle*, is to excite compaſſion and terrour: from whence it neceſſarily follows, that we are not to make choice of a very vertuous Man, to involve him in miſery; nor yet on the other ſide, of one who is very vicious.

Beaum. I deſire to know how you draw that Conſequence.

Freem. The Conſequence is juſt: For the making a very good Man miſerable, can neither move compaſſion nor terror; no, that muſt rather occaſion horrour, and be deteſted by all the World. On the other ſide, by repreſenting a very bad Man miſerable, a Poet may pleaſe an Audience, but can neither move terrour nor pity in them: for terrour is cauſed in us by a view of the Calamities of our Equals; that is, of thoſe who reſembling us in their faults, make us, by ſeeing their Sufferings, apprehenſive of the like Misfortune. Now if at any time an Audience ſees a very wicked Man puniſhed, each Man who knows himſelf leſs guilty, is out of all fear of danger, and ſo there can be no terrour: nor can the calamity of a very wicked Man raiſe compaſſion, becauſe he has his deſert.

Beaum. What ſort of Perſon muſt be made choice of then?

Freem. Why one who is neither vertuous in a sovereign degree, nor excessively vicious; but who keeping the middle between these extreams, is afflicted with some terrible calamity, for some involuntary fault.

Beaum. Well, and just such a Man is Mr. *Dryden*'s *Oedipus*, who cannot be said to be perfectly vertuous, when he is both Parricide and Incestuous; nor yet on the other side excessively vicious, when neither his Parricide nor Incest are voluntary, but caused by a fatal ignorance.

Freem. Aye, but says *Dacier*, to punish a Man for Crimes, that are caused by invincible ignorance, is in some measure unjust, especially if that Man has other ways extraordinary Vertues. Now Mr. *Dryden* makes his *Oedipus* just, generous, sincere, and brave; and indeed a Heroe, without any Vices, but the forementiond two, which were unavoidable both. Now *Sophocles* represents *Oedipus* after another manner, the distinguishing Qualities which he gives him, are only Courage, Wit, and Success, Qualities which make a Man neither good nor vitious. The extraordinary things that he pretends to have done in *Sophocles*, are only to have kill'd four Men in his Rage, and to have have explain'd the Riddle of *Sphinx*, which the worst Man in the World that had Wit, might have done as well as *Oedipus*.

Beaum. Well, but does not *Sophocles* punish *Oedipus* for the very same Crimes that Mr. *Dryden* does, *vid.* for his Incest and Parricide? If not, for what involuntary faults, does the *Sophoclean Oedipus* suffer.

Freem. Aristotle by those Offences, which his Interpreter *Dacier* calls involuntary, does not mean only such faults as are caus'd by invincible ignorance, but such

ſuch to which we are ſtrongly inclin'd, either by the bent of our Conſtitutions, or by the force of prevailing Paſſions. The faults for which *Oedipus* ſuffers in *Sophocles*, are his vain Curioſity, in conſulting the Oracle about his Birth, his Pride in refuſing to yield the way, in his return from that Oracle, and his Fury and Violence in attacking four Men on the Road, the very day after he had been fore-warn'd by the Oracle, that he ſhould kill his Father.

Beaum. But, pray, how were thoſe involuntary Faults?

Freem. Dacier means here by involuntary faults, faults that have more of human frailty in them, than any thing of deſign, or of black malice. The Curioſity of *Oedipus* proceeded from a Vanity, from which no Man is wholly exempt; and his Pride, and the Slaughter that it cauſed him to commit on the Road, were partly cauſed by his Conſtitution, and an unhappy and violent Temper. Theſe are faults that both *Ariſtotle* and *Dacier* ſuppoſe, that he might have prevented, if he would have uſed all his diligence; but being guilty of them thro' his neglect, they afterwards plunged him in thoſe horrible Crimes, which were follow'd by his final Ruine. Thus you ſee the Character of the *Athenean Oedipus*, is according to theſe Rules of *Ariſtotle*, the fitteſt that can be imagin'd to give Compaſſion and Terrour to an Audience: For how can an Audience chooſe but tremble, when it ſees a Man involv'd in the moſt deplorable Miſeries, only for indulging thoſe Paſſions and Frailties, which they are but too conſcious that they neglect in themſelves? And how can they chooſe but melt with compaſſion, when they ſee a Man afflicted by the avenging Gods with utmoſt ſeverity, for Faults that were without malice,

and which being in ſome meaſure to be found in themſelves, may make them apprehenſive of like Cataſtrophes? For all our Paſſions, as *Dacier* obſerves, are grounded upon the Love of ourſelves, and that Pity which ſeems to eſpouſe our Neighbor's Intereſt, is founded ſtill on our own.

Beaum. Why, will you perſwade me, that becauſe an Audience finds in itſelf the ſame vain Curioſity, and the ſame ungovern'd Paſſions, that drew *Oedipus* to Murder and Inceſt, that therefore each Spectator ſhould be afraid of killing his Father, and committing Inceſt with his Mother?

Freem. No, you cannot miſtake me ſo far; but they may very well be afraid of being drawn in by the like neglected Paſſions to deplorable Crimes and horrid Miſchiefs, which they never deſign'd.

Beaum. Well then, now I begin to ſee the reaſon, why, according to the Sence of *Ariſtotle*, the Character of Mr. *Dryden*'s *Oedipus* is alter'd for the worſe: For he, you'll ſay, being repreſented by Mr. *Dryden* Soveraignly Vertuous, and guilty of Parricide only by a fatal invincible Ignorance, muſt by the ſeverity of his Sufferings, inſtead of compaſſion create horrour in us, and a murmuring, as it were, at Providence. Nor can thoſe Sufferings raiſe terrour in us, for his Crimes of fatal invincible Ignorance, not being prepar'd, as they are in *Sophocles*, by ſome leſs faults, which led him to thoſe Crimes, as it were, by ſo many degrees. I do not conceive how we can be concern'd at this; for Terrour, you ſay, ariſes from the Sufferings of others, upon the account of Faults which are common to us with them. Now what Man can be afraid, becauſe he ſees *Oedipus* come down at two Leaps from the height of Vertue to Parricide, and to Inceſt, that there-

therefore this may happen to him? For a Man who is himself in Security, cannot be terrified with the Sufferings of others, if he is not conscious to himself of the Faults that caus'd them: but every Man who is disturb'd by unruly Passions, when he sees, how the giving way to the same Passions, drew *Sophocles*'s *Oedipus* into Tragical Crimes, which were never design'd, must by reflection necessarily be struck with Terrour, and the apprehension of dire Calamities. This, I suppose, is your Sence.

Freem. Exactly.

Beaum. Well, but the Authority of *Aristotle* avails little with me, against irrefutable Experience. I have seen our *English Oedipus* several times, and have constantly found, that it hath caus'd both Terrour and Pity in me.

Freem. I will not tell you, that possibly you may have mistaken Horrour for Terrour and Pity: for perhaps it is not absolutely true, that the Sufferings of those, who are Sovereignly Vertuous, cannot excite Compassion. But this is indubitable, that they cannot so effectually do it, as the Misfortunes of those, who having some Faults, do the more resemble ourselves: And I think, that I may venture to affirm two things: First, That if any one but so great a Master as Mr. *Dryden*, had had the management of that Character, and had made the same mistake with it, his Play would have been hiss'd off the Stage. And Secondly —

Beaum. I must beg leave to interrupt you: Why should you believe that another Man's Play upon the same Subject, would have miscarried upon that mistake, when I never heard it yet taken Notice of?

Freem.

Freem. It would have miſcarried, tho' the miſtake had ne're been found out: For a common Author proceeding upon ſuch wrong Principles, could never have touch'd the Paſſions truly. But Mr. *Dryden* having done it by his extraordinary Addreſs, the Minds of his Audience have been ſtill troubled, and ſo the leſs able to find his Error.

Beaum. But what was that ſecond thing, which you were going to obſerve?

Freem. It was this: That if Mr. *Dryden* had not alter'd the Character of *Sophocles*, the Terrour and Compaſſion had been yet much ſtronger.

Beaum. But how could ſo great a Man as Mr. *Dryden*, make ſuch a miſtake in his own Art?

Freem. How did *Corneille* do it before him, who was certainly a great Man too? And if you'll believe *Dacier*, *C'etoit le plus grand genie pour le Theatre qu'on avoit Jamais veu*: Great Men have their Errors, or elſe they would not be Men. Nay, they are miſtaken in ſeveral things, in which Men of a lower Order may be in the right. This has been wiſely order'd by Providence, that they may not be exalted too much; for if it were not for this, they would look down upon the reſt of Mankind, as upon Creatures of a lower Species.

Beaum. Do you believe then, that *Ariſtotle*, if he could riſe again, would condemn our *Engliſh Oedipus*?

Freem. He would condemn it, or he would be forc'd to recede from his own Principles; but at the ſame time that he paſſed Sentence on it, he would find it ſo beautiful, that he could not chooſe but love the Criminal; and he would certainly crown the Poet, before he would damn the Play.

Beaum.

Beaum. But 'tis high time to return to Mr. *Rymer*'s Book; you were ſaying, you diſlik'd the Deſign of it.

Freem. Yes; but if you will come to morrow Morning to my Lodgings, there I ſhall give you my Reaſons for it. We have criticiz'd ſufficiently for one time; beſides, at my Chamber I have two or three Books, which I may have an occaſion to cite.

Beaum. Well then, let us drink a Glaſs and be merry. Come, *Jack*, here's your Miſtreſs to you.

Freem. Nay, Faith, *Ned*, I am reſolv'd to be ſober to Night.

Beaum. Prithee, canſt thou be otherwiſe in my Company? How many grave Lectures have I been forc'd to read to thee over a Bottle, in order to keep thee ſober?

Freem. But, as the Devil would have it, thou art ſeldom Philoſophically given in Company, but at the ſame time thou art inclin'd to be damnable Drunk too. Have you forgot ſince you grew drunk in *Hamp-ſhire*, in extolling the Dogma's of *Seneca*? When the Company laugh'd to ſee the Speculative *Stoick*, a Practical *Epicurean*.

Beaum. However, 'tis ſomething to ſpeak for Sobriety: I never heard you do that, unleſs when we were in *Italy* together, once at *Florence*, for want of leuder Employment, you declaim'd in praiſe of the *Italian* Temperance; but it was only in order to get a ſober Seignior to ſit out another Flask with you.

Freem. Faith, Rallery apart, I always eſteem'd Drunkenneſs the moſt odious of Vices. There is ſomething to be ſaid for Whoring, Whoring is according to Nature, but Drunkenneſs is a Vice againſt Nature; we go always with the Stream to Letchery, but we often

often tug againſt it to arrive at Drunkenneſs. He who drinks five Brimmers in a hand, might certainly have perform'd a very good Action without half ſo much violence offer'd to his inclination. And he who out of his Love to Converſation, is often perſwaded to drink hard, might, if he has but never ſo little delicacy, be vertuous with leſs reluctancy.

Beaum. But ſince Drinking is ſo unnatural a Vice, how comes it ſo much in faſhion amongſt us?

Freem. Why ſome witty Men, they ſay, introduced it upon the Reſtoration, and the Fools finding the imitation eaſie, immediately fell into the Dance.

Beaum. The Wits were horribly o'reſeen in beginning it, but the Fools were in the right in carrying it on.

Freem. How can that be?

Beaum. Becauſe a Fool has as much reaſon to declare for Drunkenneſs, as a poor Dog has to declare for Levelling: for Death does not level Conditions more than Drunkenneſs equals Capacities. A Blockhead when he's drunk, may talk as well as a Man of Sence, if in the ſame Condition; nay, better perhaps: for that quantity of Wine will make a witty Man mad, which will but juſt be ſufficient to animate the cold and flegmatick Maſs of a Sot. They who have cauſe to be aſham'd of themſelves, have reaſon to be fond of Diſguiſes; now Drunkenneſs is a very convenient Mask to make a Blockhead paſs *Incognito*.

Freem. Thou art in the right of it, and upon this Remonſtrance I would have left it off, if I had been never ſo fond of it before. But 'tis now ſome time that I have had a mortal Quarrel to it.

Beaum.

Beaum. I ſhrewdly ſuſpect, that Drunkenneſs began the Quarrel: for if that had not maul'd you with your Rheumatiſm, I ſuppoſe theſe Invectives might have been ſpar'd.

Freem. Well, come, will you go? We'll pay at the Bar.

Beaum. Thou art Seven Years older, and ſhalt be my Governour. But my Lodgings are neareſt, will you go lie with me?

Freem. No, Faith, Sir, I hope for a better Bedfellow; but to Morrow at Eleven I expect you. Till then, Adieu.

Beaum. Your Servant.

The End of the Second Dialogue.

D DIA-

DIALOGUE III.

Freeman in his Chamber, repeating,

Should Nature's Self invade the World again,
And o're the Center ſpread the Liquid Main,
Thy Power were ſafe —

(*Enter to him* Beaumont.

Beaum. WHY how now *Jack*? At the ſcandalous Exerciſe of repeating this Morning? Art thou in Debt?

Freem. What makes you ask that?

Beaum. Becauſe if thou art, thou recreſt to ſcare away Duns perhaps. But whoſe are thoſe Verſes? If they are thine, I ſcamper immediately.

Freem. You are very merry, Sir.

Beaum. 'Sdeath! I had rather be lampoon'd this Morning, than ſtay to hear a Critick's Verſes.

Freem. Well, they are *Waller*'s, Sir.

Beaum. Aye, now thou ſay'ſt ſomething, *Jack.*

Waller *by Nature for the Bays deſign'd,*
With Spirit, Force, and Fancy unconfin'd
In Panegyricks is above Mankind.

At leaſt *Jack*, thou canſt not be ſo impudent as to diſſent from Mr. *Rymer*, in his Judgment of thoſe incomperable Verſes upon the Fleet.

Freem.

Freem I am that impudent Dog, I gad.

Beaum. Why, are not the Thoughts new there?

Freem. Yes.

Beaum. And Noble?

Freem. Yes, very Noble; but a Pox they are not all of them true tho'.

Beaum. You had beſt ſay too, that the Language is not clean and majeſtick.

Freem. I need not ſay ſo, it ſays enough of itſelf.

Beaum. This is down-right Spirit of Contradiction; I deſire you to ſhew me three faults in thoſe Verſes, without being hypercritical.

Freem. Here, take the Book and repeat them then.

Beaumont reads.

Where e're thy Navy ſpreads her Canvas Wings,
Homage to thee, and Peace to all ſhe brings.

Have you any thing to ſay to that Couplet?

Freem. Yes; if Mr. *Waller* had been to ſay that in Proſe, he would have expreſſed himſelf otherwiſe: he would have ſaid thus: Where e're thy Fleet goes, ſhe carries Peace to all, and cauſes all to pay or do Homage to thee: For where e're ſhe goes ſhe brings Homage; would not be good *Engliſh* in Proſe.

Beaum. Why, will you allow nothing to be ſaid in Verſe, that may not be ſaid in Proſe too.

Freem. Yes, an Expreſſion may be too florid, or too bold for Proſe, and yet be very becoming of Verſe. But every Expreſſion that is falſe *Engliſh* in Proſe, is barbarous and abſurd in Verſe too. But pray proceed.

Beaumont reads.

The French *and* Spaniard, *when thy Flags appear,*
Forget their Hatred, and consent to Fear.

Freem. I have nothing to say to that Couplet: Go on.

Beaumont reads.

So Jove *from* Ida, *did both Hosts survey,*
And when he pleas'd to Thunder, part the Fray.

Is not that a Noble Similitude?

Freem. Yes; but the word Fray is altogether unworthy of the Greatness of the Thought, and the Dignity of Heroick Verse. Fray is fitter to express a Quarrel betwixt drunken Bullies, than between the *Grecian* and *Trojan* Heroes, and fitter to be parted by *Stokes*, than by thundring *Jove*. But go on.

Beaumont reads.

Ships heretofore on Seas, like Fishes sped,
The mightier still upon the smaller fed.

Freem. That is to say, as a great Fish Breakfasts or Dines upon a small one, so a great Ship chops up a little one. I have known several, who, to their sorrows, have seen a Ship drink hard, but I never met with any who have seen one eat yet.

Beaum. P'shaw, Pox, this is down-right Banter. This is to fall into the very same fault which you have condemned in others.

Freem.

Freem. I ſtand corrected, Sir, without rallery then, this Metaphor *Feed*, is too groſs for a Ship, tho' I perfectly know what Mr. *Waller* means by it. But what think you of the word *Sped*? Is that an Heroical word?

Beaum. No, I muſt confeſs, that *Sped* is ſomething too mean.

Freem. Too mean! why it is fit for nothing but Burleſque, Man. Beſides, the word *heretofore* ſeems too obſolete, nor is *Fiſhes* very Heroical.

Beaum. Come, *Jack*, you had better let them two paſs, it will be an Error on the Right-hand: for Good Nature makes ſome amends for Error; but Error and ill Nature is the Devil and all.

Freem. Let them paſs then. In the ſecond Verſe of this Couplet, we have *mightier* oppos'd to *ſmaller*; whereas the word that is truly and naturally oppos'd to *ſmaller* is *greater*.

Beaum. Methinks too, that ſhould ſooner have occur'd to Mr. *Waller*.

Freem. Doubtleſs it did ſo: But Mr. *Waller* could not make uſe of that; for if he had, he muſt directly and apparently have affirm'd a thing which is not true. For we know very well, that a ſmall Privatier will take a Merchant man bigger than itſelf. Tho' all that Mr *Waller* has got by avoiding that Rock, has been only to run himſelf on another: for by oppoſing *mightier* to *ſmaller*, he infers, that the *mightier* are ſtill *greater*, which is to imply a falſe thought, if not to expreſs one. But pray go on.

Beaumont reads.

Thou on the Deep impoſeſt nobler Laws,
And by that Juſtice haſt remov'd the Cauſe.

Of

Of those rude Tempests, which for Rapine sent,
Too oft, alas, involv'th the Innocent.

Freem. I see you have taken Notice yourself, of the Want of a Pause at the end of the first Couplet, by proceeding to the second. But, pray, what is that Comparative *Nobler* referr'd to? For *Laws* are neither mention'd before nor after. Now every Comparative, according to Grammar and good Sence, ought to be referr'd to a Positive: *Nobler Laws* than what? Or then there were when?

Beaum. Why then there were, when one Ship destroy'd another.

Freem. That is as much as to say, *Nobler Laws* than there were when there were no Laws at all. But what do you understand by removing the Cause of those rude Tempests? for that seems to me to be something obscure.

Beaum. Thou art a pleasant Fellow, faith; What accuse Mr. *Waller* of obscurity?

Freem. I have always admir'd Mr. *Waller*, for a great Genius, and a gallant Man. Nor am I more pleas'd with any of his Excellencies, than with the clearness of his happy turns. But from his being generally clear, can you infer, that he was not once in his Life obscure? Pray what do you understand by removing the Cause of those Tempests?

Beaum. Why, I understand the Pyrates; for Mr. *Waller* could not think, that our Fleet could remove the Winds sure.

Freem. No? we shall see that immediately. But what do you understand by involving the Innocent?

Beaum. Why, involving them in Ruine, in Destruction.

Freem.

Freem. To involve a Man in Ruine is intelligible enough, but barely to involve a Man cannot be good *Engliſh*, methinks, becauſe it preſents no clear Notion of any thing to my Mind. But tell me truly, *Ned*, If any one ſhould talk to thee of a rude Tempeſt, which ſent upon the Ocean for Rapine, ſometimes involves a very honeſt Fellow, would'ſt not thou ſwear, that that Man banter'd thee? Are not theſe thoughts and words ill ſuited? —But I ſee you have nothing to reply, and therefore proceed.

Beaumont reads.

Now ſhall the Ocean, in thy Thames *be free*
From both theſe Fates of Storms and Pyracy.

Freem. That is as much as to ſay, Now your Majeſty's Fleet's at Sea, *Boreas* has blown his laſt. Henceforward the poor Dog will not dare to peep out of his hole, for fear of being ſerv'd as the *Perſian* ſerv'd his Brethren.

In Cornua atque Eurum ſolitus ſevire flagellis.

And as there never was a Storm yet upon the *Thames*, ſo there ſhall never be one henceforward upon the Ocean.

Beaum. 'Slife! thou banter'ſt me now indeed.

Freem. Yet this is the down-right meaning of the Couplet, or there can be no meaning at all in it. But pray go on.

Beaum.

Beaumont reads.

But we most happy who need fear no Force,
But winged Troops, or Pegasean *Horse.*

Freem. That *winged* should have been *wing'd*; but that was the fault of the Age, and not of Mr. *Waller*; who, to do him Justice, was the first who began to contract our Participles which end in *ed*; which being not contracted, exceedingly weaken a Verse.

Beaum. But are all our Participles that end in *ed*, to be contracted?

Freem. No, you must except wounded, confounded, boasted, wasted, and the like, because we cannot express two *d's*, or *td*, without a Vowel between them; and consequently we should not be able to distinguish the fore-mention'd Participles from their Verbs, if they should be contracted.

Beaum. But is not curst to be excepted too?

Freem. That may be sometimes excepted too: because when that Participle is not contracted, it is not only liable to be mistaken for the Preterperfect Tense of its Verb, but for an Adjective of a different signification, *vid.* curst, which signifies the same with fierce.

No Tygress *on* Hyrcanian *Mountains curst.*
No Lybian Lioness *is half so curst.*

Says Sir *Richard Fanshaw* in his Translation of *Pastor Fido.* But pray go on.

Beaumont reads.

'Tis not so hard for greedy Foes to spoil
Another Nation, as to touch our Soil.

Freem.

Freem. There is nothing to ſay to that: Go on.

Beaumont reads.

Should, Nature's Self invade the World again,
And o're the Center ſpread the Liquid Main,
Thy Power were ſafe, and her deſtructive hand,
Would but enlarge the Bounds of thy Command.
Thy ——

Freem. Hold, you go on too faſt, Mr. *Beaumont.*

Beaum. Why, can any thing be more Noble than this?

Freem. This is truly ſublime indeed; but I have an exception to make to the ſecond Verſe. For what does Mr. *Waller* mean, by ſpreading the Liquid Main o're the Center? The Center is either taken for an imaginary Point, which is Mathematically in the midſt of the Globe, and ſo to ſpread any thing over the Center cannot be good Sence; or the Center is taken for the whole Globe, conſiſting of Land and Sea, and then to ſpread the Main over the Center, is to ſpread the Center over itſelf.

Beaum. This Criticiſm ſeems to be juſt enough.

Freem. Nor am I ſatisfied with the Epithet Liquid; for every Epithet is to be look'd upon as a Botch, which does not add to the thought. Now it is impoſſible to think of the Sea, without thinking that it is Liquid at the ſame time. But go on.

Beaumont reads.

Thy Power were ſafe, and her deſtructive hand
Would but enlarge the Bounds of thy Command.

Freem. Well, go on.

Beaumont reads.

Thy dreadful Fleet would ſtile thee Lord of All,
And ride in Triumph o're the drowned Ball:
Thoſe Towers of Oak o're fertile Plains might go,
And viſit Mountains where they once did grow.

Freem. This is a moſt noble paſſage indeed; but the word drowned is not ſonorous, beſides it ſhould be contracted. Proceed.

Beaumont reads.

The World's Preſerver never could endure,
That finiſh'd Babel *ſhould thoſe Men ſecure,*
Whoſe Pride deſign'd that Fabrick to have ſtood
Above the reach of any Second Flood.

Freem. Come make an end.

Beaumont reads.

To thee he Choſen more indulgent, He
Dares truſt ſuch Pow'r, with ſo much Piety.

Freem. That *He* ſeems to be a Botch. But methinks Mr. *Rymer* has a very odd Obſervation at the latter end of theſe Verſes; for here, ſays he, is both *Homer* and *Virgil*; here is the pious *Æneas*, and the *Fortis Achilles*: whereas Mr. *Waller* does not deſign to praiſe the King for his Valour here. There is a great deal of difference betwixt Power and Valour; the laſt is Perſonal, the other in the reach of Fortune.

Beaum

Beaum. Well, but you declare then, that you are of too refin'd a taſt to reliſh *Waller*?

Freem. I thought I had declar'd the quite contrary. My deſign in making theſe Remarks on his Verſes upon the Fleet, was only to ſhew you, that Mr. *Rymer* has miſtaken the moſt incorrect Copy of Verſes that perhaps Mr. *Waller* has writ, for one of his rareſt Maſterpieces. Yet all incorrect as thoſe Verſes are, I have told you, that I perfectly admir'd ſome places in them; from whence any Man may reaſonably conclude, that I have an Opinion of Mr. *Waller* in the main, which is anſwerable to the Merit of that extraordinary Man.

Beaum. But methinks the very faults of a Great Man ought to be reſpected upon the account of his Excellencies.

Freem. The very contrary of which is true: Upon that account they ought to be the rather expos'd. His Faults are the more dangerous on the account of his Excellencies. For young Writers, before they have Judgment to diſtinguiſh, are ſometimes ſo far miſtaken, as to copy the very Faults of famous Poets for Beauties. One thing I will eaſily grant you, that to expoſe a Great Man's Faults, without owning his Excellencies, is altogether unjuſt and unworthy of an honeſt Man.

Beaum. Well: But ſince you will not allow theſe Verſes to be what Mr. *Rymer* affirms them to be, pray let me hear you name a Copy of Verſes, whoſe Thoughts or Language you have no exception to. But a Pox, a Caviller can never eſteem any thing perfect.

Freem. Then will I ſhew you, that I am no Caviller.

Beaum. Nay, I am certain. I can name one Author, whoſe Verſes you can have no exception to.

Freem. Pray, who may they be, Sir?

Beaum. Who may it be? why who the Devil ſhould it be, but thy Self, Man? To whoſe Verſes can a Critick have no exception, but his own? Come, prithee, *Jack*, let us hear one of thy finiſh'd Pieces now. Come, do not I know, that thou wouldeſt not have taken all this pains to pull down the Reputation of another, if it were not to ſet up thy own.

Freem. Curſe of this unſeaſonable Rallery: Can any thing be more inſipid than an untimely Jeſt?

Beaum. Why are you ſo barbarous, as to rake into the Aſhes of the Dead then? If Selfiſh and Haughty were but here, what d'ye think they would ſay?

Freem. Thoſe are two ſpecial Sparks indeed. Who will allow the Dead to have had no Faults, and the Living to have no good Qualities. When Mr. *Oldham* was alive, thoſe two Gentlemen would allow him to have neither Wit nor Genius, which none but Sots could deny him; and they have the impudence to be angry now, if a Man will not allow him to have had both Delicacy, and a good Ear, which none but Blockheads can grant him. In *Horace*'s time, there were a ſort of Gentlemen, who were juſt the Reverſe of theſe two: they would allow none to be paſt Cenſure, but thoſe who had been dead a hundred Years. *Horace* to expoſe them, made uſe of a peculiar addreſs. I may venture to ſhew the folly of our Sparks, by the very ſame addreſs, with a contrary application: Ours will allow none to be liable to Criticiſm, but thoſe who have been rotten long enough to have ſecur'd an Author in *Horace*'s time. You take it then for granted, that an Author who has been dead this hundred Years, is obnoxious to Cenſure?

Beaum. Yes; or elſe it would be barbarity to attack *Shakeſpear*, who has not been dead ſo long.

Freem.

Freem. Well then, ſuppoſe our Author has been dead a hundred Years, wanting one?

Beaum. One Year can ſignifie nothing, and he is ſtill obnoxious to Cenſure.

Freem. Very good, Sir.

Utor permiſſo, caudq; pilos ut equine
Paulatim vello: & demo unam, demo etiam unum
Dum cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi
Qui redit ad faſtos, &c.

That is to ſay, Sir, I will do as if I were to pull off a Horſes Tail, I will one by one ſubſtract the Years, till you confeſs your Errors; for I will oblige you to one of theſe two things, either to confeſs that the Dead are not to be attack'd at all (and ſo there can be ſcarce any Criticiſm); or elſe to fix upon the particular Year when they begin to be liable. And I think you'll own, that to fix upon that would be ridiculous enough in all Conſcience.

Beaum. But pray, what ſhould be the reaſon, that all Men exclaim ſo againſt arraigning thoſe who have been lately dead, if they have any Opinion of them?

Freem. One reaſon may be, that the ſhewing them Faults which they could not find out themſelves, upbraids them with want of diſcernment, and diſturbs their good Opinion of themſelves: And another which is ſtronger is this; that they have a ſecret fear of being thus arraigned in their turns.

Beaum. But People can with ſome Patience hear of the Faults of thoſe who have been long ſince dead. What ſhould be the meaning of that?

Freem. The meaning is plain: For how few are thoſe who think of being remembred a hundred Years after they are dead?

Beaum.

Beaum. Yet all this while you have forgot to name a Copy of Verſes, which may be allow'd to be more perfect than thoſe which you have juſt condemn'd. Come name them, Sir.

Freem. You muſt excuſe me, Sir.

Beaum. Nay, prithee let's hear.

Freem. *Then hear, O hear, in what exalted Strains*
Sicilian *Muſes*, *thro' theſe happy Plains*,
Proclaim Saturnian *Times*, *our own* Apollo *Reigns*.

Beaum. So, Mr. *Dryden*, I perceive, is oblig'd to you.

Freem. Not a jot oblig'd: For art thou ſuch an Aſs to think, that I commend another Man's Verſes for the Author's ſake?

Beaum. For whoſe then pray?

Freem. For my own moſt certainly, that I may paſs for a Man of Judgment.

Beaum. Well, tho' thou art a vain Dog, yet every vain Dog would not have made this honeſt Confeſſion. But when ſhall we come to the Main Point? This has been a long Prelude: Faith, let us 'en Print this Conference, and give it the Title of *The Preamble*, as a worthy Author in King *Charles* the Second's time, entituled his Book, *The Preface*.

Freem. However, Chance has not ſo unhappily thrown us upon this Method: for you being prepoſſeſs'd with the reaſonableneſs of Mr. *Rymer*'s Deſign, the ſhewing you his Errors in two or three things that are of leſs importance, may go ſome way towards the removing your prejudices, and the preparing you to hear Truth when we come to the principal matter.

Enter

Enter Freeman's *Boy.*

Boy. Sir, a Gentleman below would ſpeak with you.

Freem. I beg your Pardon for a moment. There lies *Dacier* upon the Table, you may divert yourſelf with him, till I return.

The End of the Third Dialogue.

DIALOGUE IV.

BEAUMONT, FREEMAN.

Freem. SO, I have now got looſe, and have ſecur'd us againſt more interruption.

Beaum. Now then, let me hear your Objections to Mr. *Rymer*'s Deſign; for nothing can ſeem more commendable to me, than his intention, which is to reſtore Tragedy to its primitive purity, by re-eſtabliſhing the Ancient Method, and reviving the Rules of *Ariſtotle.*

Freem. I am for obſerving the Rules of *Ariſtotle*, as much as any Man living, as far as it can be done without re-eſtabliſhing the Ancient Method. But becauſe the Ancients Tragedies had little Love in them, that therefore ours muſt have little too; becauſe the Ancient Tragedies had a Chorus, that therefore we muſt ridiculouſly ape them; this is what I cannot endure to hear of.

Beaum.

Beaum. But why ridiculously ape them? Mr. *Rymer* pretends that the Chorus is necessary; nay, that it is always the most necessary part of a Tragedy; that the *French* have lately seen the necessity of it, and that the success of their last Plays has sufficiently justified the Wisdom of their late Reformation.

Freem. 'Tis very inexcusable in a Man of Sence, to make any conclusion from success. The *French* before now have damn'd a very good Play, and consequently may like an ill one. *J'ay veu* (says St. *Euremont*) *Corneille perdre sa Reputation (s'il est possible qu'il la perdit) a la representation d'une de ses meilleurs pieces.* *I have seen*, says he, Corneille *lose his Reputation (if it had been possible for him to lose it) at the acting of own of his best Plays.* Which he speaks to condemn the changable Relish of the *Parisians.* Nor is it true, that the *French* saw any necessity for the restoring the Chorus. Monsieur *Recine*, in his Preface to *Esther*, which was the first Tragedy that has been lately writ with a Chorus, says, That he was put upon the handling that Subject in that Method, by those who had the Superintendency of the House of St. *Cyr*; that is, by Madam *de Maintenon.* So that what Mr. *R*— calls a necessity, was but at the best a conveniency.

Beaum. A conveniency!

Freem. Aye; for upon the Writing this Religious Play with a Chorus, the cloister'd Beauties of that blooming Society, had a favourable occasion of shewing their Parts in a Religious way, to the *French* Court.

Beaum. Let me die, if thou hast not been reading the scandalous Chronicle.

Freem. Many an honest well-meaning Text has met with a wicked Comment.

Beaum. But what does it signifie, whether the *French* found

found the Chorus neceſſary, or only found it convenient. Mr. *Rymer*, whom all the World allows to be a competent Judge of theſe matters, not only affirms it to be neceſſary, but the moſt neceſſary part of a Tragedy.

Freem. That it is not the moſt neceſſary part of a Tragedy, I ſhall prove by an Argument, which, if Mr. *Rymer* admits of *Ariſtotle*'s Rules, will amount to a demonſtration. For Tragedy, according to *Ariſtotle*, is the imitation of an Important Action. Now an Action may be imitated without the Chorus, but not without the Epiſode.

Beaum. What is it that you call Epiſode?

Freem. All that was between the ſinging of the Chorus, which is all our Modern Tragedy. But further, Fable is the very Soul of Tragedy, according to Mr. *Rymer* himſelf. Now nothing is more plain than this, that the Fable in Tragedy may ſubſiſt without the Chorus, but not without the Epiſode: From whence it neceſſarily follows, that the Epiſode is always the moſt neceſſary part of a Tragedy; for without it, Tragedy can have no Soul, and conſequently can have no Being.

Beaum. This, I muſt confeſs, is ſomething.

Freem. Something? Well, to compleat your Conviction, I ſhall add the Authority of *Dacier*, who has theſe words in his Comment upon *Ariſtotle*'s Treatiſe of Poetry, *Chap.* 12. *Sect.* 6.

Le Tragedie n'etoit dans ſon origine qu'un choeur ſans acteurs. Enſuite on ajouta les acteurs, pour delaſſer le chœur, & tout ce que ces acteurs diſoient entre deux chants du chœur, s'appelloit Epiſode, comme qui diroit parte ajoutée, parce que ces recits etoient pieces etran-

geres & surajoutels à une ceremonie dont elles ne faisoient point partie ; mais quand la Tragedie eut commencé à se former, & que les recits qui n'etoient que les partie accessoine furent devenues les principal alors, &c.

So that it is plain, according to the Sence of *Dacier*, that tho' the Chorus was at first the Foundation of Tragedy, it is now the least necessary part of it.

Beaum. Well, you seem to have prov'd, that the Chorus is not the most necessary part of a Tragedy, however it may be necessary, and therefore ought to be restor'd. Mr. *Rymer* affirms particularly, that it is necessary to confine a Poet to unity of place.

Freem. There he is so far mistaken, that Monsieur *Racine*, who in several of his former Tragedies, has with Religion, observ'd that unity, has not tied himself to it so scrupulously in the very first Tragedy which he writ with a Chorus, which he owns himself in his Preface to *Esther*, and is plain to any one who reads that Tragedy. And whereas Mr. *R* — affirms, that the Chorus is not to be lost out of sight, let him but consult the first Scene of the Second Act of *Esther*, and the Seventh Scene of the Third Act of *Athaliah* (which is the Second Play that *Racine* writ with a Chorus) and he will find, that in those Scenes the Stage is without a Chorus.

Beaum. But has not *Racine* in that deviated from the ways of the Ancients?

Freem. I must confess, I believe he has; for having lately read over the *Oedipus* and *Antigone* of *Sophocles*, I find, that in those two Plays, the Chorus is always in sight. However, this may serve as an Argument to prove two things: First, That if a Poet will be irregular, he may as well break the unity of place with a Chorus,

rus, as without it. Secondly, It may prove, that *Racine* undertook to write his *Eſther*, purely out of compliance with Madam *de Maintenon*. For if he had done it with a deſign of conforming to the Ancients, he would doubtleſs have conformed in every thing: but he has been ſo far from doing that, that his *Eſther*, you know, has but Three Acts; which is directly contrary to the Precept of *Horace*,

Neve minor quinto neu ſit productior actu
Fabula —

And to the Practice of the Ancients.

Beaum. Why, as far as I can remember, *Sophocles* and *Euripides* never diſtinguiſh'd their Plays by Acts.

Freem. They did not make uſe of the word Act, to denote their Diſtinctions, as the *Romans* afterwards did; but however, the Chorus ſung four times in the intervals of the Epiſode, as the Muſick plays four times in the Intervals of the Acts with us.

Beaum. You affirm then, that the Chorus is neceſſary upon no account.

Freem. I cannot conceive how the Chorus can be neceſſary, if Tragedy can attain its end without it. Now the end of Tragedy, according to *Ariſtotle*, is to excite Compaſſion and Terrour, in order to the purging of thoſe, and the like Paſſions. And Terrour and Compaſſion may be excited without a Chorus, perhaps better than with it.

Beaum. Pray, why ſo?

Freem. Becauſe the Chorus in ſome meaſure muſt calm an Audience which the Epiſode diſturb'd by its Sublimity, and by its Pathetick; and therefore he who makes uſe of a Chorus in Tragedy, ſeems to me, to do like a Phyſitian, who preſcribing a Doſe for the evacuation of Peccant Humors, ſhould afterwards order Reſtringents to be taken in the midſt of its kind Operation. The Song of the Chorus muſt be forreign from the matter, or pertinent: If forreign from the matter, it muſt not only calm the Mind in ſome meaſure, but take it off from the ſubject. But if it is never ſo pertinent, it muſt very much cool a Reader, if not a Spectator; tho' I make no queſtion, but it muſt have the ſame effect upon both.

Beaum. But you ought to prove, that it muſt have the ſame effect upon both.

Freem. If it has not, it muſt be wholly unprofitable: for the deſign of the Chorus is to give good Advice, to preach up Morality, to extol Vertue, to praiſe or pray to the Gods.

Ille bonis faveatq; & conſilietur amici
Et regat iratos, & amet peccare timentes;
Ille dapes laudet menſæ brevis: ille ſalubrem
Juſtitiam legeſq; & apertis otia portis.
Ille tegat commiſſa, deoſq; precetur & oret
Ut redeat miſeris abeat fortuna ſuperbis.

Horat. Art. Poet.

Now I would fain know, how an Audience that is extreamly diſturbed with Terrour, or with Compaſſion, can be capable of harkning to good Advice, of apprehending the reaſonableneſs of good Inſtruction, or of performing Religious Duties.

Beaum.

Beaum. But pray, if Terrour and Compaſſion muſt be rais'd to ſuch a height without receiving any check, how can they be ſaid to be purg'd?

Freem. Dacier has given us a very ſenſible account of that. For as the Humors in ſome diſtemper'd Body are rais'd, in order to the evacuating that which is redundant or peccant in them; ſo Tragedy excites Compaſſion and Terrour to the ſame end: For the Play being over, an Audience becomes ſerene again, and is leſs apt to be mov'd at the common Accidents of Life, after it has ſeen the deplorable Calamities of Hero's and Sovereign Princes.

Beaum. Now here have I an Objection to make, which muſt be confeſs'd to be of ſome importance. *Ariſtotle* has given Rules for the Chorus, which he would not have done, unleſs he had believ'd it neceſſary. *Horace* has follow'd his ſteps. *Dacier*, who is *Ariſtotle*'s beſt Interpreter, has endeavour'd its reſtoration: He has declar'd the neceſſity of it, for teaching Morality to the People; he has told us, that *Racine* was convinc'd that there was a neceſſity for it; and he has commended him for reviving it in his laſt Tragedies.

Freem. But pray, Sir, how came you to know what *Dacier* ſays? I thought you had told me, you had not convers'd with the Criticks lately.

Beaum. I read this in *Dacier*'s Preface, but now, when you left me alone.

Freem. Indeed, it muſt be confeſs'd, that *Ariſtotle* has mention'd the Chorus, and diſcours'd of the different parts of it. But then, conſider how large a ſpace the Chorus took up in the ancient Tragedy, and how little *Ariſtotle* has ſaid of it, and you will be oblig'd to own that he ſlighted it, and would have made no men-

mention of it, if he could have avoided it; but he could not do that, being engaged to treat of the whole Art of the Stage. Nor could he in prudence condemn the use of it, if you consider that it was Religious in its Office and Institution. The same Answer will serve for *Horace*, because his Religion and Design were the same with *Aristotle's*. *Dacier* shall answer himself: For if he declares a Chorus to be necessary in his Preface, he tells you in his Comment upon the Sixth Chapter of *Aristotle*, that he scarce believes it to be natural, and that having several times wonder'd, how so delicate and so ingenious a People as the *Athenians* must be allow'd to be, could think it agreeable to Nature, or Probability, that a Chorus who represented the Spectators of a Tragical Action, should sing and dance upon such extraordinary and moving Events; he was oblig'd to attribute it to the Inclinations and Superstition of the *Greeks*; who, as they were the People of the World the most inclin'd to Singing and Dancing, (which natural bent of theirs was fortified by Education) so were they the most bigotted of all Nations; and Singing and Dancing, which help'd to constitute the Ceremonials of their Religion, were held as Sacred by them, and of Divine Institution: So that when *Dacier*, who tells us in his Comment upon the Sixth Chapter, that he could not have believ'd the Chorus natural, if it had not been so adapted to the Superstition and Musical Temper of the *Greeks*; declares it to be necessary in his Preface; he must do it out of belief, that his own Country-men were as airy Bigots as the *Greeks*.

Beaum.

Beaum. And, Faith, he was very much in the right of it. How many *French*-men have we ſeen, who between the Firſt and Second Courſes have riſen from Table, and danc'd to their own damn'd Voices? I muſt conſeſs, they do not dance at Church, but they have ſeveral apiſh Geſticulations there, which one may eaſily miſtake for Dancing, and which are as entertaining to the full. But for Singing, it is both their Diverſion and Duty.

Freem. Well then; all this conſidered, it is no wonder that *Dacier* ſhould tell us, That *Racine* being to write upon a Religious Subject, ſaw a neceſſity for a Chorus; that is, for a great deal of Singing and Dancing: for without it there had been two inconveniences: Firſt, The Religion of the Stage had been more free from Superſtition, than that of the Altar. And, Secondly, a Play had been more inſipid than High Maſs.

Beaum. Yet *Dacier* has given us two Reaſons for the neceſſity of a Chorus, that have nothing to do with *Racine*: For a Chorus, ſays he, is neceſſary, Firſt, To deliver Moral Sentiments to the People. And, Secondly, To reflect upon what is vicious and commendable in the Characters of the primary Actors; in which he is certainly in the right. Now the Chorus being retrench'd from our Modern Tragedy, Morality muſt be retrench'd at the ſame time. For the principal Actors being ſhaken by violent Paſſions, cannot be made ſentencious; for Sentences require Reflection, and that requires Serenity; at leaſt ſome degree of Serenity. How then can our Theatre, the Chorus being retrench'd, be ſaid to be the School of Virtue? Or how can any one be the better for Modern Tragedy?

Freem.

Freem. Our Theatre may be ſaid to be the School of Vertue, upon two accounts. Firſt, becauſe it removes the greateſt Obſtructions to Vertue, by reducing the Paſſions to a juſt mediocrity, from their violence and irregularity. And Secondly, becauſe it teaches ſome Moral Doctrine by the Fable, which muſt always be allegorical and univerſal.

Beaum. This Anſwer is ſomething ſatisfactory. But what can you anſwer to the Second pretended neceſſity for reſtoring the Chorus? which is, that the Stage may be furniſh'd with Perſons, who may commend or blame any thing that may be vicious or excellent in the Characters of the primary Actors? For there may be a neceſſity ſometimes for their ſpeaking prophanely and impiouſly; which may be of dangerous conſequence, without the Reflections of the Chorus.

Freem. Nothing that is ſaid, can be of pernicious conſequence in a Tragedy, if it is writ as it ought to be. That is, if it is what *Horace* calls, *Fabula recte morata.*

Beaum. Pray what may that be?

Freem. A Tragedy is *Fabula recte morata*, in which the Manners are well painted: So that every Actor diſcovers immediately by what he ſays, his Inclinations, his Deſigns, and the very Bottom of his Character; then if any thing is ſaid impiouſly, an Audience not only knows that it is ſpoken by an impious Man, but by one that is upon the Point of being puniſh'd for his Impiety.

Beaum.

Beaum. This ſeems to be ſenſible enough: But now good Sence requires that we ſhould think of our Dinner: for a hungry Sophiſter, who diſputes at the time he may eat, does but defraud his own Genius, to put a cheat upon another Man's Reaſon: Therefore, let's to the Cock, and I'll ſend for *Jack Wild* to make a third Man; who ſhall very dogmatically tell you, that there can be no Tragedy without a Chorus.

Freem. But can he prove it?

Beaum. That you ſhall judge when you have heard him.

Freem. Well: I'll follow you.

The End of the Fourth Dialogue.

DIALOGUE V.

BEAUMONT, FREEMAN.

Scene, Freeman's *Chamber*, *after Dinner.*

Beaum. WAS ever any Man mawl'd as thou haſt been! *Jack Wild* has handled you as you deſerv'd, I'faith: Thou wert quite baffled, quite run down, Man!

Freem. Baffled and run down, Good! Are we in *Bow-ſtreet*, or on the *Bank-ſide*? Your Mr. *Wild* has an admirable Talent for running People down, I confeſs. But doſt not thou know, that the ſilliеſt thing that a Man can do, is to ſpeak Sence in ſome Company? Is it not a greater ſign of Judgment to hold one's Tongue, than to talk Reaſon to People who cannot hear it?

Beaum. Then you do not believe he was in the right, it ſeems?

Freem. I am not quite ſo credulous. I muſt confeſs Mr. *Wild* had got *Dacier* without Book perfectly; nay, and that very place in *Dacier* which pleads moſt ſtrongly for a Chorus. But then he would admit of no Anſwer. I would adviſe Mr. *Wild* to take Orders; a Pulpit

Pulpit ſure is the only place where Impertinence has priviledge to be tedious, without interruption. But thou wert as attentive as any Fanatical Bigot at a Conventicle: therefore, if you can recollect his Reaſons, I dare undertake, to convince you of their inſufficiency.

Beaum. Faith, I'll try; but then you ſhall engage, that if I happen to ſhew ſuch a plaguy Memory, I ſhall not loſe my Reputation of a Wit with you.

Freem. That I do readily engage for, I'faith.

Beaum. So then; his firſt Argument was this: Tragedy is the imitation of a Publick and Viſible Action; therefore there ought to be a Chorus.

Freem I muſt confeſs, *Dacier* affirms, That Tragedy muſt be the Repreſentation of a Publick and Viſible Action; but *Ariſtotle* ſays no ſuch thing, that I know of.

Beaum. But common Sence tho' ſays ſo: For if an Action is not publickly viſible, how can it be ſeen by ſuch a numerous multitude?

Freem. How can an Action, the Scene of which is in *Greece*, be ſeen by us here in *England*?

Beaum. Nay, I will grant you, that there is an occaſion for us to give way to a wholſome deluſion, if we deſign to receive either delight or profit from the *Drama*. But however, a Poet is ſtill to endeavour, that his Repreſentation be attended with as much probability as it is capable of; And it is much eaſier for a thouſand Spectators to imagine themſelves in ſome open place, either at *Mycenæ* or *Thebes*, than to imagine themſelves in a King's Cabinet, in either of thoſe two places.

Freem. I muſt confeſs what you ſay appears to be reaſonable, but how do yon infer from hence, that there ought to be a Chorus?

Beaum. The Action of a Tragedy being publickly viſible, and acted by Perſons of the moſt exalted Ranks, it is impoſſible but that there muſt be People beſides the Actors, intereſted in the principal Action, upon which Action the Fortune of thoſe People muſt in ſome meaſure depend.

Freem. And theſe People you'll tell me, are to conſtitute the Chorus.

Beaum. Right.

Freem. This, I muſt confeſs, is according to *Dacier*; but his Doctrine is neither warranted by *Ariſtotle*, nor always by the Practice of the Ancients; for it does not appear to me, for example, what dependance, as to their Fortunes, the Chorus in the *Electra* of *Sophocles*, has upon the principal Actors. But ſuppoſe we had Charity to grant, that it is impoſſible for a grave and important Action to be acted in publick by great Men, but others muſt intermeddle in it: Can *Dacier* infer from hence, that theſe People thus concerned, ought to ſing and dance at their Princes Sufferings? I will grant it probable, that at the Sufferings of Kings ſeveral ſhould be concern'd; at the ſame time you muſt grant it abſurd, that they ſhould ſing and dance at their Sufferings. Now would you have a Poet ſhew a thing that's abſurd, to ſhew ſomething elſe that is probable, when the probability may be ſuppos'd as well as ſhewn, or ſhewn without an abſurdity.

Beaum. How can that be?

Freem. In our modern Tragedies, as well as the ancient, there are ſeveral concern'd beſides the Actors;

I mean, beſides the primary Actors (for the Chorus was an Actor in the old Tragedy, and ſpoke like a Jury by its Fore-man) but they have ſome better reaſon for their being concern'd, than purely their itch of meddling; nor do they expreſs their concern in a way which is contrary to all Decorum: But I could give you an example of a Chorus, where the ſinging is not only abſurd and unnatural, but deſtructive of the Poet's deſign.

Beaum. That example I ſhould be glad to hear.

Freem. 'Tis the Chorus at the end of the Firſt Act in the *Electra* of *Sophocles*.

Beaum. How does that which is ſung by the Chorus there, run counter to the deſign of the Poet?

Freem. I will, in as few words as I can, give you the Fable of that Tragedy: *Clytemneſtra*, with her Adulterer *Ægyſtus*, aſſaſſinates her Husband *Agamemnon*; but her Son *Oreſtes*, by means of his Siſter *Electra*, eſcapes: after a long abſence from *Mycenæ*, he arrives ſecretly with *Pylades* and his Governour, ſurprizes *Clytemneſtra* and her Adulterer, and revenges the Death of his Father. The Scene opens with the Arrival of *Oreſtes* before the Royal Palace of *Mycenæ*, at Break of Day, where they find *Electra* lamenting her ſad Condition. The Chorus adviſe her not to be ſo loud, leaſt ſhe ſhould be heard by *Ægyſtus*: yet as ſoon as ever ſhe is gone, they grow infinitely louder, and in a Conſort of Fifteen Voices, threaten Ruine to *Clytemneſtra* and her Adulterer. 'Tis true, they were told that *Ægyſtus* was not in the Palace; but they knew very well, that *Clytemneſtra* was there, and that *Ægyſtus* would be with her that very day. Now this coming after an unlucky Dream, which *Clytemneſtra* look'd on as ominous;

nous; which Dream is mentioned by this very Chorus. This Song must in all reason alarm *Clytemnestra*, and prevent the surprize which is design'd by the Poet. Besides, how did this Chorus dare thus loudly and publickly to contemn *Clytemnestra* before her own Palace, at the very time that she had the Sovereign Power in her hands?

Beaum. I must confess, I am not able to give any Answer to this.

Freem. I could shew you another gross absurdity in that very Tragedy, which is purely occasion'd by the Chorus. But pray go on to the next Argument.

Beaum. I would fain know first, what that other absurdity is: a digression sometimes is as much worth the while as the main matter; and I have always been pleas'd to hear of the Errors of any extraordinary Man, because it has still been the best support to me, under the mortifying Sence, which I have of my own Infirmities.

Freem. The absurdity which I speak of, is, the discovery that *Orestes* makes of himself and his design, to *Electra*, in the Fourth Act of that Tragedy (which he does in the presence of the Chorus); so that he entrusts a Secret upon which his Empire and Life depends, in the hands of Sixteen Women: For *Orestes* had no Friends on whose assistance he might rely, unless it were his Friend and his Governour, and consequently he had nothing to depend upon, but Secresie and Surprize, and a swift Execution.

Beaum. Has *Dacier* in his late Comment upon *Electra*, taken no notice of those two mistakes?

Freem.

Freem. He has taken no notice at all of the first; which I was extremely surpriz'd at: For that Error seems to me apparently to shock common Sence. I must confess, he has taken notice of the last, because he thought he could make a defence for it. But he has done it after such a manner, that I am sorry that a Man of Monsieur *Dacier*'s Merit should talk at so poor a rate.

Beaum. At how poor a rate?

Freem. I have considered that passage enough to give you the *English* of it *Verbatim*. There are several Persons, says he, of extraordinary Merit, who cannot endure to see Plots and Contrivances against the Lives of Princes, in the presence of a Chorus, pretending that this cannot be probable; nay, that it cannot be natural. But these People, says he, ought to reflect upon the Conditions that are necessary to qualifie a Chorus rightly. The Chorus ought to be interested in the Action, as much as the principal Persons, they ought to be animated by the same Spirit, and all their Happiness ought to depend upon their Secrecy and their Fidelity. And when a Chorus is thus qualify'd, there is nothing which may not be said before it, without any violation to probability. And then it is as natural to see a Conspiracy concerted before it, as it is to behold a number of Conspirators closely consulting in some secure Retirement. The Chorus of *Electra* is of this nature, says he.

Beaum. And is it?

Freem. Monsieur *Dacier* may imagine what he pleases, but there is nothing that the Chorus or Electra says, that may induce a Man to believe, that the fortune of the first depends upon the success of the last.

laſt. But ſuppoſing it did, can any Man who has common Sence believe, that a Prince, as diſcreet as *Oreſtes* is repreſented by *Sophocles*, ſhould entruſt a Secret, upon which his Empire and Life depended, with fifteen Women, only upon the recommendation of his Siſter, whoſe diſcretion he had no reaſon to have any mighty Opinion of? But this has been a long digreſſion, therefore pray proceed to the next Argument, which Mr. *Wild* brought for a Chorus.

Beaum. A Tragedy, ſaid he, is the imitation of an Action, which muſt be one and entire; and therefore there muſt be a Chorus: For without it the Acts can never be joyn'd, there will be a ſolution of continuity, and Tragedy can never be one entire Body. Pray, what can you anſwer to this?

Freem. This, I muſt confeſs, is the Bugbear Argument; but we ſhall do well enough with it. Then Mr. *Wild* and you fancy, that the Action breaks off every time that the Muſick plays between the Acts?

Beaum. That is Mr. *Wild*'s Opinion.

Freem. But then I could tell you, that the Action is ſuppos'd to be continued behind the Scenes.

Beaum. How can an Audience be ſure of that? Or when the Stage is left empty upon the end of the firſt Act, what grounds has a Company to believe the Actors will return? What grounds, I ſay, can they have, but Cuſtom, which is but a ridiculous Security at the beſt, and can be none at all, to one who ſees a Tragedy acted the firſt time. Whereas a Chorus naturally keeps the Company together, till the return of the principal Actors.

Freem.

Freem. But ſure, I ſhould think, that an Audience between the Acts ſhould have a much better Security for the return of the Actors than Cuſtom, and that is from the nature of Tragedy, which is the imitation of an entire action; that is, of an Action which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Now this beginning and middle, are, according to *Ariſtotle*, Things that neceſſarily ſuppoſe ſomething to follow.

Beaum. When you talk at this rate, you ſuppoſe that every one who ſees a Tragedy, underſtands the Rules of *Ariſtotle*.

Freem. The Rules of *Ariſtotle* are nothing but Nature and Good Sence reduc'd to a Method: I may very well ſuppoſe, that every one who goes to ſee a Tragedy acted, goes with a hope, that he ſhall not ſee ſomething abſurd, and that he has common Sence to know, that a Tragedy would be very abſurd, which ſhould conclude abruptly, before the juſt end of the Action; that is to ſay, before that part of it, which neceſſarily ſuppoſes nothing to follow it.

Beaum. You ſay the Song of the Chorus is very abſurd and unnatural; but are not the Fiddles between the Acts a great deal more abſurd and unnatural. A Poet in a Tragick Imitation, is always to have an eye to probability. But is it probable, that *Oedipus*, or any other Prince, ſhould four times in the height and fury of his Paſſion, leave the Scene of Action, purely to give leave to a Company of Muſitians to divert the Spectators four times, leaſt they ſhould be too much ſhaken by the progreſs of the terrible Action? Would not ſuch a one be a merry Monarch, a very complaiſant Wretch?

Freem. Has not *Dacier* reaſon to be aſham'd of this empty Sophiſtry, which may ſo eaſily be retorted upon himſelf? For would it not be as ridiculous to make a King leave the Scene of the Action four times, only to give way to the People who compoſe the Chorus? Any Man knows, that in Plays which have a Chorus, and in Plays which have none, 'tis the neceſſity of the Action, which makes the Actors leave the Stage. For an Actor never leaves the Stage in a Tragedy which is writ as it ſhould be, but when he has buſineſs in another place. But ſuppoſe I ſhould grant you, that the Fiddles are more abſurd than a Chorus, we do not pretend that our Muſick makes a part of Tragedy, as you pretend that the Chorus does, and if there muſt be an abſurdity, it had better been in Ornament than in Eſſentials.

Beaum. But if your Muſick does not make a part of the Modern Tragedy, how can it be ſaid to be one body, when the parts of it are not united?

Freem. 'Tis not the tagging of the Acts with a Chorus, that properly makes a Tragedy one Body, but the Unity of the Action; and for my part, I cannot conceive, but that the Parts are ſufficiently united, when the Action has a Beginning, a Middle, and an End, which have a mutual neceſſary and immediate dependance. But if it ſhould be granted to *Dacier*, that the Fiddles between the Acts are abſolutely deſtructive of the Unity of the Poem, he could never infer from it, that there ought to be a Chorus, when the miſchief may be prevented another way.

Beaum. What way is that?

Freem. Why, by not dividing Tragedy into Acts at all.

Beaum.

Beaum. But ſeveral Inconveniences would follow from thence.

Freem. I will eaſily grant it; but any inconvenience ought to be admitted, rather than that grand abſurdity a Chorus. For Poetry being an imitation of Nature, any thing which is unnatural ſtrikes at the very Root and Being of it, and ought to be avoided like Ruine.

Beaum. Well, thou haſt here taken a great deal of pains to prove, that we ought not to re-eſtabliſh the Chorus; but you promis'd to ſhew me, that we ought not to baniſh Love neither.

Freem. I have now an appointment which I am oblig'd to keep touch with. But when we next meet, I will not only engage to demonſtrate that to you, but to ſhew you, that contrary to Mr. *Rymer*'s aſſertion, *Shakeſpear* was a great Genius.

Beaum. I ſhall be very glad, if you perform what you ſay. But prithee tell me before we part, your Opinion of Mr. *Rymer*'s Judgment of our *Engliſh* Comedies.

Freem. Never was there a more righteous Decree. We have particularly a Comedy which was writ by a Gentleman now living, that has more Wit and Spirit than *Plautus*, without any of his little contemptible Affectations; and which, with the Urbanity of *Terence*, has the Comick force which the Great *Cæſar* requir'd in him.

Beaum. What Comedy can that be?

Freem. What indeed can it be, but the *Plain Dealer*?

Beaum. I find then, that you do not diſſent from Mr. *R*—— in every thing.

Freem.

Freem. No, I should be very sorry if I should do that; for his Censures of *Shakespear* in most of the particulars, are very sensible and very just. But it does not follow, because *Shakespear* has Faults, that therefore he has no Beauties, as the next time we meet I shall shew you.

Beaum. Well, till then, your Servant.

Freem. Honest *Ned*, Adieu.

THE END.

ERRATA.

In the LETTER to a Friend.

FOR *exerted Compassion.* read *excited Compassion.* for *warmer Sun* r. *warm a Sun*, for *desire* r. *desired.* for *following Dialogue* r. *following Dialogues.* for *is a base Envy* r. *is shews a base Envy.* for *greater Geniuses than they* r. *greater Geniuses in* England, *than they have in* France.

Dialogue *the Third.*

Page 18. for *Panegyricks* r. *Panegyrick.* p. 19. for *I desire you* r. *I defie you.* p. 22. for *gallant Man* r. *gallant Writer.* for *Sevire* r. *Sævire.* p. 29. for *caudæ, &c.* r. *caudæque pilos ut equinæ.* Dialogue IV. p. 32. for *Retine* r. *Racine.* p. 34. for *parties accessoine* r. *les parties accessoires furent devenues les principales.* p. 36. for *amici* r. *amicis*, for *erator* r. *irator.*

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